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The Noiseless Spider

a literary magazine

THE NOISELESS SPIDER

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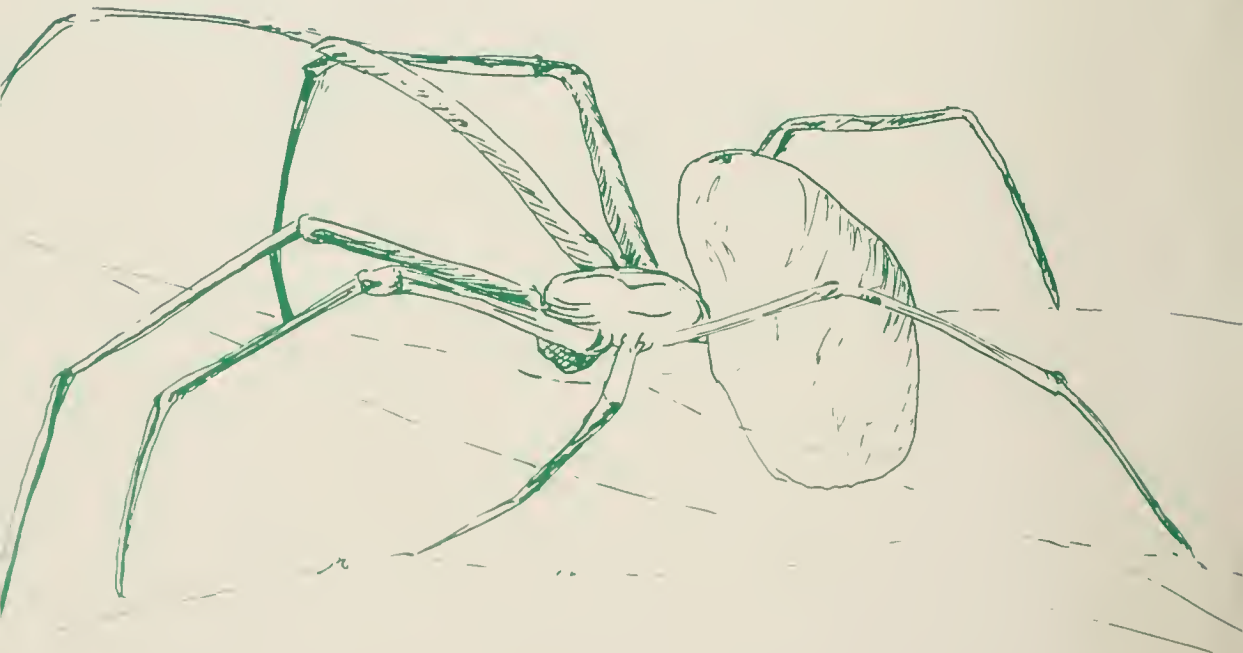
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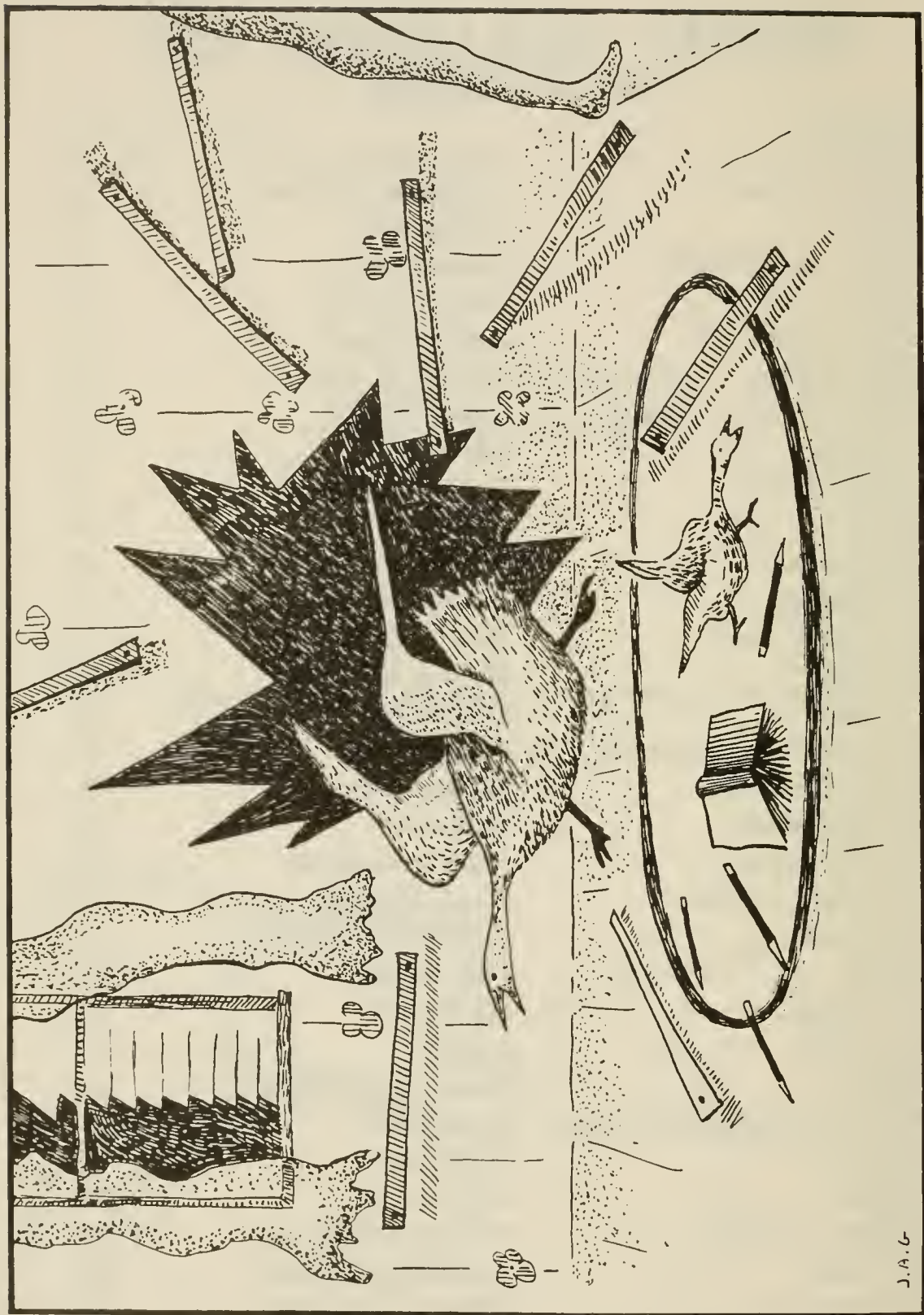
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J.A.G.

— Joan Gardner

If I Were A Goose

awk squawk!

a hawk!

bam slam

a man!

If I were a goose

I'd flutter in utter amazement

at two legged bandy legged bandits

I'd seen on the road by the room

I'd have no excuse

for the flurry I'd loose

except at the tail ends of brooms.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

Homer

The child Homer
Teases a little girl
With a stick.

His eyes
Not yet gone blind
See where to hit.

— *Jay Halpern*

Youngest in the Ward

How can anybody sleep
who's been parked in a bed all day?
But the rest of them are snoring,
one a dog and one an ocean;
one, wind in a tree; and one
a wound; the others, cars and trucks.
Six hours until the nurses bring
our morning pills in dixie cups.

They pass by intermittently
with lights, like roadstops on a pike—
make sure no bed is driverless.
(While they arranged me for the knife,
one of them compared my shaved
and unshaved legs, "Half man, half woman."
Then the anaesthesia towed me
under the repairmen's hands.)

Driving healthward with the rest
I lack their sureness of the road.
This is the country of the old.
I wear my glasses in the dark.

— *Edward Stessel*

Family

It's a worn and frayed thread
holding together my favorite pair of blue jeans
The deep root of the old berry tree
we used to climb
A broken glass that casts shattered fragments
in so many directions—
at one time it was bound together and
carefully planned—delicately formed but now
strewn in so many places

Is it possible to collect the pieces and put
them together with Krazy Glue? Will it be the same?
Will it really hold or is the effort useless . . .

— *Michele Klotzer*

Joshua: On His Own

The thick whiskers blanket what appears
to be a handsome face.
The eyes are innocent and frightened
telling of the loved ones left behind.
A leather duffel bag is slung over his shoulder.
The contents being pieces of his other life.
A brown frayed yarmulke sits perched high upon his head.
His hand reaches up to it and he takes the silk
from its nest.
And like a young sparrow on his first flight
he marches into the sunlight to begin
on his own.

— *Michele Klotzer*

English teacher

Enforced by Dad's tuition payments
and the well-formed blonde at the end of the row,
maybe even a modicum of curiosity,
the student comes to class to learn
whatever truth I measure out
that I didn't tell him yesterday
and he hadn't known he'd missed.
I've overheard, "It's something to do.
If I didn't go to class I'd go
to pieces." And why not preserve sanity,
avoid overreaching like Faustus?
"Yeah, that old black magic!"

— *Ron Emma*

Driving in Tornado Weather

Fields are tiles
in stilted light.
Air stills.
The skyline's oily motor
sparks. Shakes. Bangs.
The cows toe barnward.
Between warnings, static warns us.

There! A tapered skirt—
miles tall—
is shuffling up
a ruff of dust.
It dances on the cornbelt
like a robber baron's wife.

Press the gas!
A dark wind
staggers fences,
goads hysteric trees.
Gravel rises up and stings.
Nothing's sitting this one out
but gravestones in their quarterlot.
On the next hill, headlights break.
They flee like us—
the other way.

— *Edward Stessel*

If I Were a Tree

If I were a tree . . .
decidedly deciduous
I'd assiduously
pursue my evening meal

hard core
to the bitter root
I'd consume
what you'd leave
light blight
chips lips
flower bowers
whatever you'd bark
in the night.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

Last Ditch

When the jailer with the black mole
on his left cheek comes toward me,
I shiver a little where I lie
like the dispossessed of the windy streets
of big cities everywhere
who take a bottle for a woman
and a rap on the ankles for their father.

— *Ron Emma*

Supine

Lavinia on the worn-in couch,
smiling at the witchery of
her head man, who
hated her,
adjusted her hemline to raise it
slightly, slowly, not sure
shekels or story had won
her the looks
clearly she wanted, owning
her lure. She ordered
her breasts to firm
and commanded
that he take his hands
off her, though they felt good:
that wasn't why
she had come.

— *Ron Emma*

Night and Day

Putting on the net of night,
no mean negligée, the cream of tarts
prepared for the coming day:
down and a down, down, down
on her back she lay.

In the morning all dayblue time
invited her down, down and a down, down down
to the streets to see and be seen: town
she would have, not sweet bird song
or nun's dark gown.

— *Ron Emma*

Intermingled

Intermingled were their lives,
together they lived as one,
creating a bond that could only be broken by they themselves.
It broke, caused by one and many reasons.
Reasons that only they will really know.
They hurt each other as never before
and thus in turn hurt themselves.
The pain lingers on . . .
 but the memories of the love shared
 diminishes the pain and all that is left
 in each heart is the love given it by
 the other.

— *Kathy Schumacher*

Past Forevers Fade

Love me in vision,
and we will love until
all the light of suns once
again subsides into the void.

Hear me in love,
and we will love
past life's harmony.

Love me in touch,
and we will love
until the dust of
all living bone blows
from the plane of time.

Most of all feel me in
thought and our love will
be the succession of all time.

— *Mark Cherry*

In the Sky

In the sky
three birds died
the other night

By the frozen morning
their cold bodies
disappeared
in the misty sun.
On the road,
two people fought
in painful hate

A snowflake fell
melting on its way
to hell
dissolving in the air.
In love
one person offers her heart
willing to give it away

But looking around
seeing the death
feeling the cold
discovering the hate—
how much life
how much warmth
how much love
can one person have
to thaw all the ice
covering the hope
on earth.

— *Michaela Kauffmann*

The Lake

Every day they are there—he can see them from across the lake. There are always the black things that pick them up and drop them off in the morning. He watches when the pests begin their celebration. Games, music, levity. At times the sounds are too much for him and he yells out loud, “I hate you bastards. To fuckin’ hell with all of you!” Then he’ll reach down and pick up a fist-sized rock and hurl it at the bright beach on the other side only to watch it fall short and make a brief, unnoticed disturbance on the water.

He wakes very early in the summer because it’s usually too hot to sleep. When he rises, the pain in his bowed spine makes him stagger for a moment. Then he shuffles to the door facing the lake to see if they are there yet. He likes the fact that the trees encircling his house in the little cove hide him from view. This morning is no different than any other. The black vans are silently rolling onto the radiant beach on the other side. “You bastards are back!” he yells. But no one hears him.

Hunger distracts him for a moment, so he walks, holding his back, into his disheveled shanty and gets the long tree branch he uses as a fishing pole. Then he ties a length of string on the top and fastens the bright, silver, barbed plug on the end of the string. He takes his time walking back to his hidden shore.

Before casting his line into the water, he scowls at the pests on the other side of the lake. Then, closing one eye, he aims the bright lure at them. Sweeping his stubby arm in an arc, he watches the lure as it falls far short of its mark and into the water. “I never can reach ’em during the day,” he says to himself, “But tonight, when they don’t see me, I’ll get ’em.”

After a few hours of unsuccessful fishing, he pulls his line in and saunters back inside his shack. He passes the remains of a mirror on the far wall and stares bewildered at his reflection. “Why didn’t they jump at the pretty piece of silver I threw to them?” he asks. Then, answering his own question, he says, “They never jump in the daytime. But they will tonight.” He smiles through his beard at himself in the dusty mirror, then quickly frowns.

Looking out his back door, he watches as another of the black vans swoops into the bright light reflected off the beach and

gathers up two or three of the little shapes moving there, then glides away without a sound. "It's *them* things," he says, "They bring the bastards in, take 'em away and bring 'em back again." He lifts a gnarled middle finger at the scene and turns his back.

The house is never very cool during the night and there are usually more bugs to pester him in the house than outside. Living only twenty feet from the lake, the rising steam from the warm surface water reaches to every corner of his shanty then melts before he can swipe at it. The little gnats and all of their bothersome companions ride in on the dissipating mist and fly around his head only to annoy him with their constant noise.

His thoughts of the day and the heat have become too annoying. He opens up the battered cabinet below the sink and takes out the half-dry fifth of Jack Daniels. Raising the bottle to his lips, he takes a slow pull on the warm liquid. Leaving one more good slug in the bottle, he places it back in the same dusty spot beneath the sink. He knows he'll want it when he returns.

Picking up his pole with the string and lure attached, he climbs up the little hill behind his shack to the road above. He strides in a lumbering gait down to the corner where Route 34 touches the dam. Alone in the light from the street lamp, with the pole in his hand, he looks like a warrior prepared for battle against a stronger army.

He stares into the bright light of the street lamp and cringes as he looks at the insects flying around in the radiance. Lifting his pole into the air, he sweeps his arm in an arc and casts the silver plug into the group of bugs. The lure falls to the ground while the pests continue with their dance in the warmth of the light as if nothing happened. "Where are you, you bastards?" he screams. As the sound of his voice dies away, he sees his enemy. A bat swoops into the bright light, gathers a few insects into its mouth, then glides away without a sound.

He waits a moment then casts his lure into the group again. Another bat swoops in, attacks the lure and is hooked. Elated, he pulls the creature to the ground and crushes it with his foot.

— *Bob Shortell*



Pensive Man

— *Tammy Garson*



Leaves

— *Tammy Garson*



Vase

— *April Palm*



Water

— *Kathy Schumacher*

Noah's Second Command

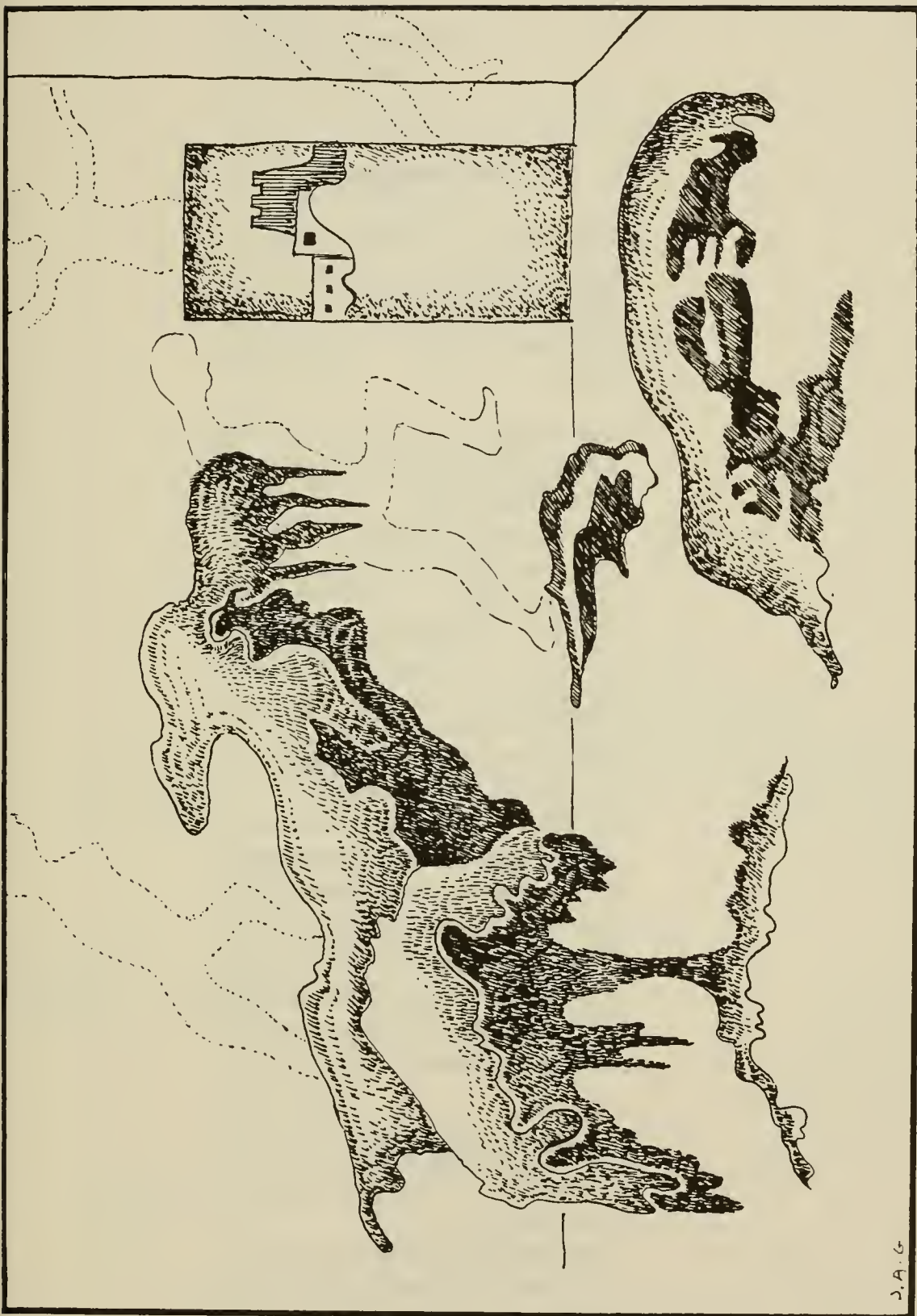
I open a can of dogfood
And dolphins leap into the room,
Clicking and squeaking their S.O.S.,
Sonic sonnets of despair.
And wild mustangs charge past the refrigerator,
Knocking down the broom,
And bellowing like doom,
Tin cans tied to their hearts.
Long-horn cattle, bullish on America,
Thunder across the linoleum,
And an army of sheep cry like assassinated babies.
But it's all to no avail.
Noah's Ark has turned to dog chow,
And all the beasts are in it,
Except the master-beast who feeds the dog.

— *Robert Pinghero*

My Unicorn

I had spent
All of my life
Looking for my unicorn.
I looked here and there,
Far and wide,
Always and everywhere.
Until,
One day,
He found me.

— *Anne-Marie Theriault*



J.A.G.

The Wealthy Poet

Habinnas, you happy man!
Come, slave;
Your master waits:
His glass is dry.
Hah!

The party's at full roar.
Krista and Kyle nod to each other
Over their wine;
Their breasts tremble;
They make lewd tongues.
Hah! See it!
I'd like to watch them at it,
Those two women.

Habinnas, you poet!
What a crowd of delights!
Simple food but plenty,
To your taste, spartan,
The proper stuff for strength,
For stamina (you lecher, Hah!),
For wisdom: brain food.
There's the pale sheath of sky,
The sun's whitegold on the water,
The wind gently teases sighs
From stiff trees.

And later
At the Bacchic hour
There'll be music
And dance
And the dry smoke
To tease the brain.
Hah!

All is happiness
And joy
And Kyle and Krista
Touching hands.

Therefore, Habinnas, why frown?
You
Are the solitary
Cloud
This day.
Can I beguile you with a song?
Perhaps a lewd dance
Will amuse
You.
Hah!

You may as well dance and sing,
Hanno;
Or not;
Do whatever you wish.

My home is yours.
I am your Host.
All I ask is that you leave me
My frown.
It is my only treasure.

Take care, Hanno:
I've risen from a dream.
My eyes are as unclouded
As the sky you praise.
The world rushes to its
End
While we eat.
Words flake from my pen,
Heartless,
Dry as burnt wafer.
There is dust in my head
And dry smoke.

My past has risen, Hanno,
Like a pale ghost.
The child I thought I was,

The child of might
And dreams,
Of great faith,
Of wise and somber
Conquests:
I've been wrong, Hanno.
I've misremembered.
I saw him rise before me
Weak and fearful
Full of spite.
As I was then,
So am I now:
I've just recalled.

Your whitegold sun
Can't change that.

Beauty and Death
Cling to the world's Chariot,
Accessible as the pale sky.
Their acquaintance is no feat.

I want more:
I want the Creator's potent nod,
To mold,
To chronicle the surfeit of the earth,
To forge its treasure
With panache.
I want a place among those noble minds
Who've gone before.

I'm not of their realm;
Their heaven is my distant star.
With cruelty
I've been awakened.

Sing and dance, Hanno.
Make this day and night
The world's wake:
It spins to darkness.
My thoughts are dark.

Yet
While I pause,
There's the tease of metaphor:
A ram stares down at me
From the lip of a well.
Behind him is the full moon.

Dance and sing, Hanno.
It will soon be dark
And I'll be gone to sleep.
Hand me my cup, please.

Which?
The one heavy with almond froth.

It's time to drink,
Still beneath the whitegold
Sun.

— *Jay Halpern*



Hand Print

— *Unknown*

Morality

Morality mounts a noble steed, a proud
and confident spectre who illuminates
His earth with righteousness.
Good will is scattered along His path
like horse shit.
Crack!
His benevolent whip,
the hooves pound furiously upon the sheets
of this earth escaping His thunder.
He lances the darkness;
blood flows from the noble neck
and mixes with spit.
Morality dies slowly.
Death juice trickles on a bag of cement,
then His statue casts a shadow
across another lonely park bench.

— *Thomas Brennan Ward*

The Death of Peregrinus Proteus

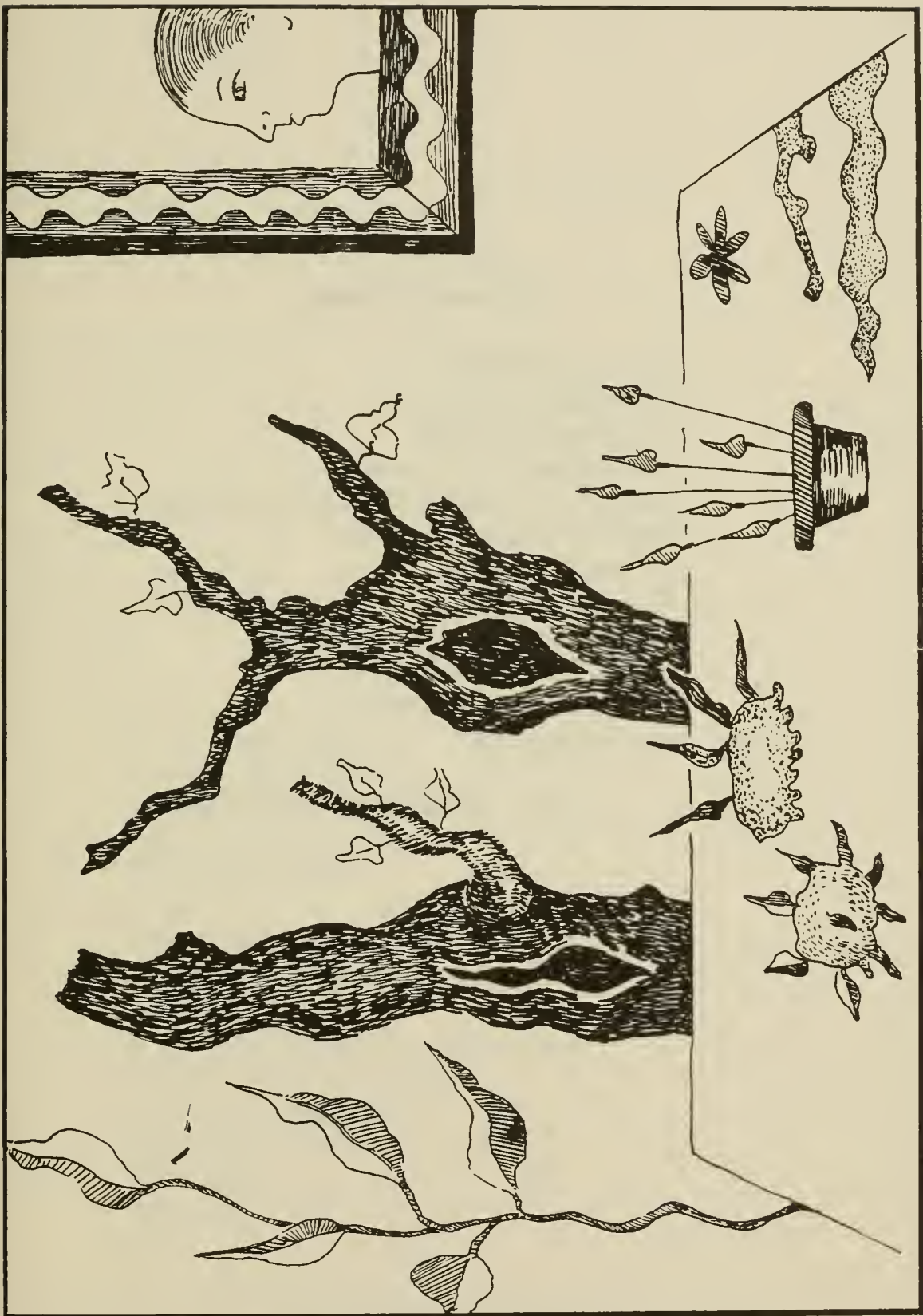
Mock me through the flames:
I see your howling faces
Egging me on.
There's fame
And the giant specters
Of gods
To embrace my spirit.
The Victors nod their triumph
To the adoring crowd.
The olive wreath rests
Upon the threshold of the temple.
Before my nostrils flared
With the harsh scent of burnt flesh,
Summer kissed the air.
I've done with the Games,
The mockery,
The wandering:
O men of Elis
Breathe deeply of my soul,
My scorched flesh.

— *Jay Halpern*

Diocles

Gather among tombs,
Lips pressed to lips:
The boys touch
And laugh,
Their tongues dancing.
Diocles, come forth,
Stretch out your hand;
Your lover lived beneath
Your shield (to mourn
Your heroism and
Death:
Be content that horror
And lost love
Have blossomed into garlands
Of gay flowers)
And immortal songs.

— *Jay Halpern*



If I were a Breath

If I were a breath
I'd swallow a tree
and ground its green
in the shape of my dreams:
roots chattering like the feet of a rooster
feathers draped with snow
ice cream drooping
in scoops of cream
mushrooms blooming in doorways
fingers fall like beaks
hook nose hides in shadow
icon leaking east.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

The Clown

The Clown danced,
in front of the crowd.
Bright colors swirled around the room,
children were laughing.
The Clown danced,
On and On,
Faster and Faster,
Brighter and Brighter.
Suddenly—
A child ran up and tore off its mask,
abruptly ending the dance.
The crowd gasped, for
they were surprised to see that
The Clown
was only
me.

— *Anne Marie Theriault*

Yesterday Poem

I'll bet you're sorry now,
Asshole.

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A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood
isolated,

Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast
surrounding.

It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,
out of itself

Ever unrolling them, ever tirelessly speeding
them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans
of space,

Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking
the spheres to connect them,

Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the
ductile anchor hold,

Till the gossamer thread you fling catch
somewhere, O my soul.

Walt Whitman